

Hezekiah Walters was a bright young man. He was a good student. And he went out of his way to make a difference in his community by volunteering.

I met him just a few weeks before he passed away, at a recognition ceremony. Hezekiah won an award...one that was created for him, because as a middle school student he had the most Volunteer Hours...of any middle school student. I was fortunate to have met him and I am sad that he is gone.

After his death, we took immediate steps to halt all conditioning drills at all high schools districtwide. We did that until we could confirm every student athlete had been cleared to play and that every coach reviewed their required trainings.

Today, I want to share some of what we have learned during our investigation.

Because we have been notified that a lawsuit is expected, we are limited in what we can say and I'm not going to be able to answer any questions. However, we wanted to let our parents, students, faculty, staff and the entire community know what we've discovered after Hezekiah's tragic death. And we want to share what we're doing to keep something like this from happening again.

We found incomplete record keeping for Hezekiah's student athlete clearance forms by an administrator and the coach. Not all of his online paperwork had been completed. We believe Hezekiah had an athletic physical but his family had not uploaded it into our system at the time conditioning began.

He had also not submitted documentation to show he had watched a series of required videos, including one on heat-related safety measures. We have an expectation that our staff will make sure all of the documents are uploaded and checked before any athlete can go on the field.

That's one of the reasons why we immediately stopped all conditioning until we could confirm that all student athletes had submitted their appropriate paperwork. Every school has confirmed that it was checked and that process has been completed.

Our Assistant Principal for Administration and the coach at Middleton did not follow those protocols at the time. We found incomplete paperwork of other student athletes at the same school. That is unacceptable.

That Assistant Principal has been demoted. He's been transferred to another school in a different role. He will no longer be responsible for student-athlete records.

The head coach was not there the day of the incident. However, he had been there on previous conditioning days. He has been transferred to another school. He will no longer be a coach.

The death of a student during sports conditioning, practice or games is a rare occurrence, but we are doing everything we can to prevent something like this in the future.

From our investigation into what happened at Middleton on June 11th, we know the athletes were given water breaks beyond what's recommended by the Florida High School Athletic Association.

According to the coaches, they had water breaks every 10 minutes.

The athletes were monitored and even directed to walk, instead of run, during the drills due to the heat.

This was the 5<sup>th</sup> day of conditioning, so the student athletes had already gone through days of training.

The school does have a defibrillator. However, when Hezekiah collapsed, coaches said he was breathing...so it was not used.

They poured cold water on him and immediately called 911.

EMS arrived within minutes and took him to the hospital where he passed away. We are waiting for more details from the medical examiner's report.

As we have stated repeatedly, the health and safety of our students is our top priority. We are heartbroken by this tragic death.

As a result, we are putting into place some additional procedures to improve student athlete safety.

Currently, we have athletic trainers at about half of our high schools. Middleton High School does have an athletic trainer.

The trainers are not our employees and their time is typically donated to the school from a medical group or outside organization.

Currently, the athletic trainers do not work during summer conditioning at all our schools.

I am going to be recommending to the School Board that each high school be supported by a full time athletic trainer. This will ensure equity at all schools. This recommendation will come to the board at their August board meeting.

We are still working out the details, but it would include conditioning in the summer, practice and games.

Please note, one full time trainer at each school cannot be everywhere at all times. All our paid coaches will continue to receive emergency medical training. An athletic trainer is not the only answer, but it is a part of our plan.

We distributed cold immersion tubs for each of our high schools a few years ago. We have reminded our athletic staff that these tubs are available and encourage them to use the tubs when weather conditions warrant.

The immersion tubs are a recommendation by the high school athletic association, not a requirement.

We are sending an email to all families today. We're letting them know that when their child is taking part in after-school activities, they are being cared for by highly trained staff who put student safety above everything else.

We appreciate your time today. For the reason stated earlier, I'm not in a position to answer any questions.

But I would like to share, I am heartbroken by Hezekiah's death. All of us in our district continue to send our thoughts and prayers to Hezekiah's mother and father and his entire family.